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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 ABUJA 000197

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AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE PASS TO AMEMBASSY MALABO

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SUBJECT: NIGERIAN SECURITY CHIEF BRIEFS FOREIGN PARTNERS ON MUTUAL CONCERNS

REF: ABUJA 0181

CLASSIFIED BY: James P. McAnulty, Political Counselor, U.S. Embassy Abuja, Political Section; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (S) Director General Afas Gadzama, Intelligence Director Yusuf Bichi, and Operations Director Mathew Seiyefa of the Nigerian State Security Service (SSS) briefed foreign diplomats and intelligence officials on security issues February 18. Gadzama welcomed the opportunity to correct what he characterized as "misrepresentations" about Nigeria from informal, unofficial, and open sources. Yet, he candidly criticized mismanagement of the current political situation and Niger Delta amnesty program. He discussed violence in Jos, the Anambra gubernatorial election, kidnappings, "Boko Haram," and foreign extremist links to Nigeria.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S) Director General Gadzama, Intelligence Director Bichi, and Operations Director Seiyefa briefed representatives of the diplomatic corps and intelligence community on security issues at SSS headquarters in Abuja February 18. U.S. Mission attendees included representatives from Regional Affairs, Regional Security, and the Political Section. Gadzama welcomed the opportunity to correct what he described as "misrepresentations" from informal, unofficial, and open sources. Operations Director Seiyefa admitted that the security service had been "stressed" by the mismanagement of the political situation, and that Nigeria's constitutional democracy had been "sorely tested." He acknowledged the December 25 bombing attempt by Nigerian Abdulmutallab as an "opportunity for enhanced cooperation," and insisted that foreign security liaison officers could attest to the "renewed vitality" of security consultations. Gadzama observed that "the Constitution has just been tried" and that said he remained mindful of those "overheating the polity" to achieve what they could not through the political processes. He applauded a "positive" outcome, in which "democracy and the rule of law prevailed."

¶3. (S) DG Gadzama remarked that his organization closely followed developments in Niger, Mali, and Chad, adding that "persons of security interest" were "straying" into Nigeria from neighboring

countries. He said the SSS has responded by stepping up surveillance on Nigeria's borders, instituting "100 percent checks," and strengthening its "watch-list process" for nationals from particular "countries of interest." The DG revealed that the SSS is monitoring the movements and activities of elements of extremist groups in cooperation with the securities services of other nations. Gadzama stated that "no one country or service can deal with the transnational security challenges" and called for greater intelligence sharing.

NIGER DELTA

¶4. (S) Despite what they described as "discordant" signals from the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), SSS officials welcomed the "marked improvement" and "dramatic stabilization of the security situation" in the Niger Delta, particularly around oil and gas installations, resulting in increased oil production. Gadzama mildly criticized "avoidable problems" in management of the rehabilitation and reintegration phases of the amnesty program, but asserted that the GON was correcting earlier missteps. He related that the disbursement of funds for the rehabilitation phase would commence within the next couple of weeks, now that the supplementary budget had been passed.

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Gadzama applauded communities that addressed criminality in their localities, and acknowledged the current political reality when he pointedly described Goodluck Jonathan as "the Acting President" while echoing his commitment to the amnesty program.

¶5. (S) Director Bichi identified Henry Okah as the only major militant leader not to have embraced amnesty, and disclosed efforts by Okah, currently in South Africa, to call his commanders in the Delta with orders to suspend the ceasefire, resulting in sporadic attacks. Nevertheless, according to Director Seiyeфа, key leaders have been "cooperative and useful" in providing intelligence and logistics for effective management of these situations. The security chiefs admitted to being "anxious" that the GON "does something quickly" on amnesty, but maintained that the government is not underestimating the restlessness of the former militants and the time-sensitivity of the reintegration program. They related that the SSS focused mainly on removing weapons from circulation, while also noting the "strong nexus between politics and militancy." They applauded press reports of 80 million dollars in pledges by international oil companies (IOCs) earlier in the week towards the reorientation and reintegration of militants. (N.B.: Embassy sources later confided that the 80 million amount had been miscalculated and was closer to 30 million dollars. END NOTE.)

VOLATILE JOS

¶6. (S) The security chiefs described the current situation following violence in Jos (reftel) as "calm," but susceptible to erupting "at any time," given underlying tensions. They characterized the conflict as a "minor crisis which started as a misunderstanding," primarily economically and politically motivated, with religion used as an excuse by "mischievous" persons to inflame tensions. According to the Intelligence Director, the

SSS detected no foreign involvement from their intelligence or investigations into the most recent violence. He noted that, during the 2008 outbreak of violence, authorities had arrested some "minors" from Niger, whom they determined not to have been combatants after further inquiry.

¶17. (S) Director Seiyefa lamented that violence in Jos had become a regular, albeit unfortunate, occurrence between mostly Christian indigenes who have political power and largely Muslim settlers with the economic power. Violence erupted there in 1991, 1994, 2001, 2004, and 2008 before the latest round of violence began January 17, 2010. Director Bichi opined that state creation had made tribalism worse, and that cell phone technology helped "fan the flames" after an outbreak of violence. He prescribed improved governance, economic development, and empowerment of the youth, so they would not "fall back on the primordial sentiments of religion or ethnicity." Director Bichi projected that foreign groups may exploit ethnic tensions and other vulnerabilities to conduct their activities. He insisted that authorities were investigating purported extrajudicial killings during the most recent violence.

"BOKO HARAM" AND FOREIGN LINKS

¶18. (S) SSS officials indicated that followers of "Boko Haram" may have escaped to Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, where they claimed that sister intelligence agencies of these countries have continued to track them. Some members allegedly tried to rendezvous in Kano,

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Jigawa, Yobe, and Borno States, and some may have "melted into" Shiites communities. SSS officials characterized cooperation between the "Nigerian Taliban" or "Shiites" and Sunni Al-Qaeda as unlikely, given long-standing enmity between the two rival Muslim factions, and downplayed reports of an alleged meeting in Algeria by "Boko Haram" adherents. Furthermore, SSS personnel had determined that conflicts occurred within and among the different extremist groups in the North, and did not (yet, at least) target foreigners. "Protests against Mid-East policies," they noted, "end up as demonstrations on the street."

¶19. (C) Director General Gadzama declared that, of the extremists groups in Nigeria, "only a few have strong linkages with external groups," although he did not specify which ones. In his estimation, these groups "lack organizational capacity, and are not structured to undertake operations which would threaten foreign interests." Nevertheless, Gadzama described poverty, poor governance, the presence of many children in Islamic schools, and an increase in radical itinerant preachers as factors of concern. "Given these predisposing factors," he concluded, "it is only a question of time before foreign groups exploit these factors in the country." The Operations Director described a more proactive approach, acknowledging the deportation last week of an itinerant preacher in Taraba State.

"VERY SUCCESSFUL" ANAMBRA ELECTION

¶10. (C) Gadzama characterized the recent Anambra gubernatorial election as "very successful" in that it transpired "in an environment free of violence, massive rigging, and other processes which would render the outcome untenable." He acknowledged, however, problems with faulty Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) voter registers and late deployment of election materials and personnel. He described the SSS as in the middle of a "post-mortem" on elections held during the past year. He expressed appreciation to Embassies that sent independent observers, and described their presence as "necessary for giving the process the credibility it deserves." He assessed the election as "reasonably fair and free."

BEWARE THE CHARLATANS

¶11. (C) Gadzama, noting that he maintained an "open door policy," cautioned foreign missions about individuals whom he described as peddling "distortions and fabrications" to foreign Embassies about supposed specific threats to their Missions. He maintained that some foreign officials had gone to the Defense Headquarters, SSS, Office of the National Security Adviser, and police with purported information on plans to target particular Embassies, that the SSS had already thoroughly investigated and determined to be false. The Director General also praised Abuja-based foreign liaison officers and (somewhat uncharacteristically) the rival National Intelligence Agency (NIA) for helping to investigate extremist connections.

CRIME AND KIDNAPPINGS

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¶12. (C) SSS officials claimed a recent decrease of 35 to 40 percent in kidnappings, but lamented that this level still represented an average of nine per month over the past two months. They noted that most kidnappings now occurred outside the Niger Delta, particularly in the Southeast, and less frequently in the South-South. They described many as apparent "insider jobs," including instances in which relatives from less affluent branches of the same family were implicated. They attributed the decline, in part, to police and SSS raids on criminal hideouts during the past three months, especially in Lagos and throughout the Southeast. Moreover, various state legislatures had enacted new criminal statutes that directly addressed kidnapping. They noted that, with the release of the most recent kidnap victim, an Indian national released about 12 hours before the briefing, no foreigners remained captive against their will. The Operations Director wryly added, however, "if your national has been kidnapped in the last twelve hours, come see us."

EXPAND THE GUEST LIST

¶13. (C) At the end, a participant suggested inviting Yemen and Saudi Arabia to future briefings, given their importance in the fight against extremism. SSS leaders expressed optimism that the

National Assembly would soon pass counter-terrorism legislation. They also expressed appreciation for inputs from foreign intelligence agencies which helped to disrupt extremist activities. During the meeting, SSS leadership twice singled out assistance by the U.S. and United Kingdom to the SSS as particularly appreciated, in addition to support from Germany and Israel.

COMMENT

¶14. (C) The SSS last conducted a briefing of this type September 18, 2009. The Nigerian Government likely wanted to show that it was responding broadly to the Abdulmutallab case. The SSS appears to remain, unfortunately, "in denial" that Nigerians are participating in foreign-inspired plots against Western interests in Nigeria. END COMMENT.

SANDERS